

Missouri Career Education

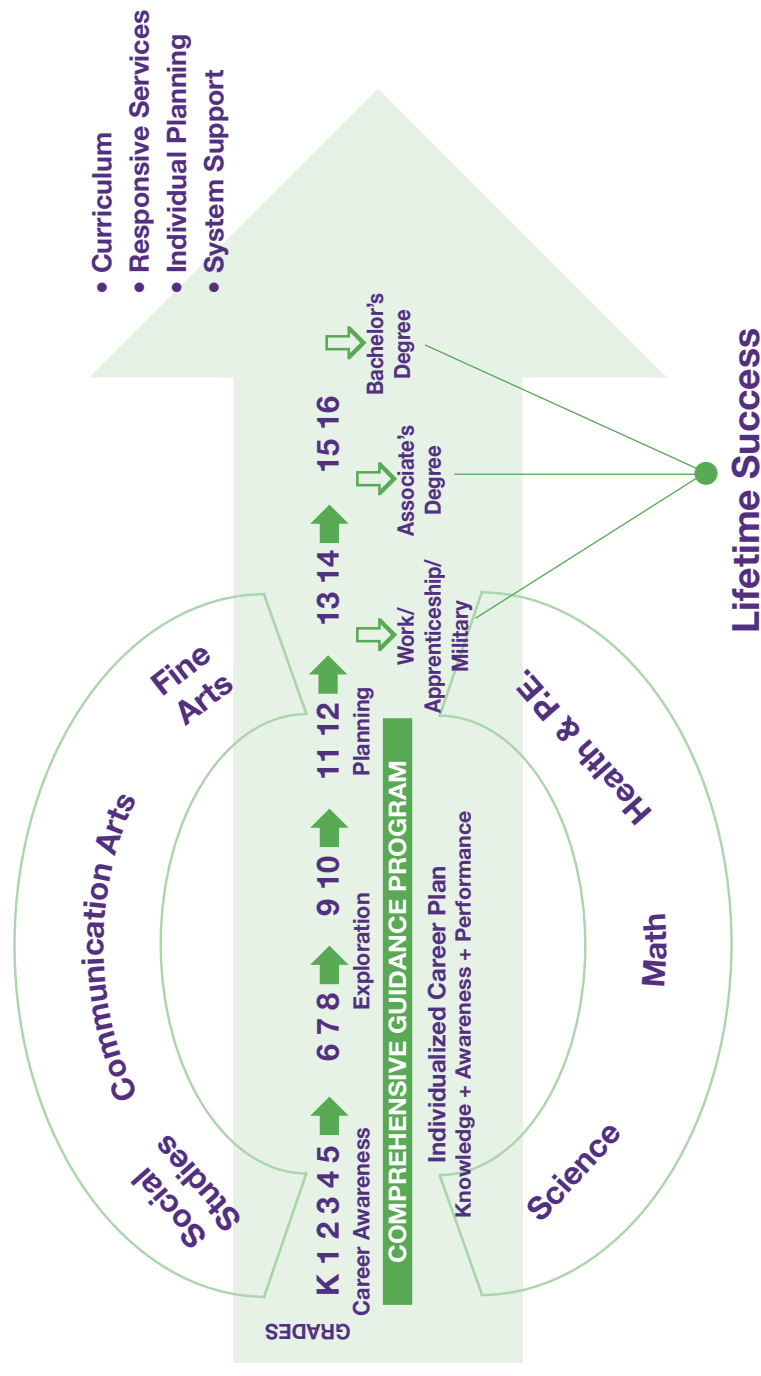
ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR **ALL** STUDENTS

*Welcome to Missouri's
Career Development
Plan for the future.
Career Paths and
Career Clusters link
what students learn in
school with the
knowledge and skills
they need for success
in college and
careers.*



Missouri Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education
D. Kent King, Commissioner of Education

Career Development: A Lifelong Process Involving Academic and Personal / Social Development



Missouri's Vision for Implementation of Career Paths/Career Clusters

THE CAREER PATHS/CAREER CLUSTERS CONCEPT is intended to give all students the academic preparation, guidance, career-related knowledge, and flexibility to help them plan studies that are in line with their interests, abilities, and career goals. The Career Paths/Career Clusters framework reinforces the schools' fundamental objectives of academic accountability and improved achievement for all students. At the same time, the Career Paths/Career Clusters offers a practical way for educators in all disciplines to create relevant contexts for their students' learning.

The Career Paths/Career Clusters can help prepare learners of all ages for the knowledge-based economy. One key to improving student achievement is to provide students with relevant contexts for studying and learning. The Career Paths/Career Clusters offers these contexts by linking school-based learning with the knowledge and skills required to be productive in the contemporary workforce.

Missouri implemented the six Career Paths, an introductory component of the Career Development Process, through Tech Prep and the A+ Schools Program and is expanding to include the use of Career Clusters. The Career Clusters Initiative grew out of a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium. The State Directors Association took the responsibility to establish curriculum frameworks and supportive materials for all 16 Career Clusters.

The National and State Cluster Advisory Committees were responsible for identifying the frameworks, pathway foundation knowledge and skills, and other supportive materials. The committees included representatives from states, schools, business and industry, associations, and others directly affected by the materials.

The Career Paths/Career Clusters supports the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's 10-year plan as defined by *Meeting the Challenge* and the 2004 *Strategic Plan* as well as Governor Bob Holden's *Missouri @ Work, An Action Plan for Economic Growth*. The goal that schools should be the place where dreams can come true for all children and families can only be met if students are prepared to be successful in the career of their choice.

The following recommendations are intended to promote a no-nonsense focus on improving student achievement in every public school as well as stronger partnerships between schools and the communities they serve.

Focus on School Career Counseling

Organize curriculum choices and the career development process around Career Paths/Career Clusters leading to Career Majors. Utilize a process of awareness and exploration at elementary and middle schools around career paths and move to planning and preparation with career clusters at the secondary level.

THE ISSUE

There are three pre-suppositions that exist about students. They are that all students:

1. have the desire, interest, and ability to go to a four-year institution and that is the only sure path to career success.
2. are fully aware of all the career opportunities available and take coursework related to careers that interest them.
3. fit neatly into one of two paths after high school graduation: going to college or going to work.

The perception that students are “college-bound” or “non-college bound” ignores the needs of all students. It seems the current system does not allow all students to work through a process of career planning that guides them in selecting a course of study in high school leading them to advanced education and training.

THE GOAL

The Career Paths/Career Clusters framework is a tool to better serve the needs of both students and employers. Through a fully implemented, comprehensive guidance program, students can ascertain and explore their abilities and interests within the Career Paths/Career Clusters framework and, by the end of the eighth grade, develop a carefully constructed, personalized educational/career plan. This plan is reviewed annually and is relevant to their current educational and career goals.

Students have the opportunity to develop plans consistent with their levels of vocational maturity and that will be compatible with their current knowledge of their interests and abilities. As students mature and/or as their interests change, they have a framework they can use to make informed decisions about adjustments to their plan as they progress through high school and postsecondary education.

All students will study a rigorous core curriculum that includes communication arts, math, science, and social studies. Additional coursework will be aligned to their chosen Career Path/Career Cluster.

At the same time, partnerships with business and industry and experiences in the workplace that are related to the student's

Career Path/Career Cluster heightens the learning experience by providing a relevant context for their academic coursework. This goal aligns with and addresses educational initiatives found in the following:

- *Meeting the Challenge: Part I, Students Recommendations #5, #7*
- *DESE Strategic Plan 2004, Outcome III*
- *Missouri @ Work, Step One: Expanding Education's Role in Economic Development*
- *No Child Left Behind*

PROPOSED ACTION ITEMS

1. Encourage counselors and teachers to use Career Paths / Career Clusters to assist students in their educational and career planning.
2. Use the Missouri Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (MOICC) data at all levels of education (elementary, middle, and high school).
3. Implement the district-wide comprehensive guidance plan (MSIP Standard 6.9) with particular attention to the career development component.
4. Enhance career guidance activities in elementary and middle schools, and ensure that every student has initiated a career focus no later than eighth grade.

SUPPORT THROUGH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

- *High Schools That Work*
- Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program
- Missouri Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (MOICC)
- Missouri School Improvement Program
- No Child Left Behind
- Program Advisory Committees that include business and industry
- Workforce System Performance Scorecard

CONCLUSION

The Career Paths / Career Clusters framework provides a foundation for students to gain knowledge about the world of work in a meaningful way while at the same time developing strong academic skills within a relevant context. This will allow them to create a flexible educational and career plan based on their interests, abilities, and vocational maturity. Because each plan is individualized, it guides and motivates learning, aligns postsecondary educational goals, and ultimately provides the direction for lifelong success.

Focus on Rigorous and Relevant School Curricula to Help Students Prepare for the Demands of the Workforce

Curriculum needs to include rigorous academics for all students. The curriculum should also be relevant to the lives of students and be aligned with current workforce needs.

THE ISSUE

There continues to be a mismatch between school curricula and workplace needs — a breakdown in the transition from classroom academics to workforce readiness. The workforce requires higher-order thinking and reasoning, teamwork skills, technical reading and writing, oral communications, and applied statistics. These competencies are critical for all employment and are as important for college graduates as for high school graduates.

THE GOAL

Strengthen school curricula to include workforce competencies and use a contextual learning model in the instructional process. As a part of the educational preparation, an educational/career plan will be developed using Career Paths/Career Clusters/Career Majors to help students make informed choices in course selection that will support their chosen career directions. This goal aligns with and addresses educational initiatives found in the following:

- *Meeting the Challenge: Part 3, Schools and Districts*
- *DESE Strategic Plan 2004, Outcome III*
- *Missouri @ Work, Step One: Expanding Education's Role in Economic Development*
- *No Child Left Behind*

PROPOSED ACTION ITEMS

1. Help all high school students, with guidance from the school and parental input, develop a four- to six-year plan of study that is congruent with their abilities, interests, and vocational maturity. This plan will be based on Career Paths/Career Clusters with a rigorous core curriculum and meaningful career-based learning experiences both inside and outside of school.

2. Encourage all high school students to choose, with parental input, a career major with an academic concentration based on workplace learning experiences.
3. Incorporate into the educational program opportunities for students to participate in workplace experiences related to their career major. Encourage student portfolios related to their career majors to demonstrate academic and employability skills.
4. Provide high-quality professional development to better assure the rigor of contextual learning.
5. Promote educational business partnerships to support Career Paths/Career Clusters.

SUPPORT THROUGH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

- A+ Schools Program
- Career Majors using Career Clusters
- Contextual Teaching and Learning
- Educator Internships/Externships
- *High Schools That Work*
- Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program
- Tech Prep
- Workforce System Performance Scorecard

CONCLUSION

Through a seamless, well-connected educational system, students will have an opportunity to efficiently study and build academic and workforce skills to achieve their personal and career goals, thereby enabling them to reach their fullest potential.

Focus on Articulation and Dual Credit

The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) requires all career education programs to have articulation or dual credit agreements to assist students in the transition to continued education.

THE ISSUE

For high school students to consider all of the options available to them, both students and their parents need assurance that whichever career major they choose offers a road to educational and career opportunities. This kind of assurance is possible with the transferability of courses and credits among institutions in all areas including career education programs. Without a transfer policy in place, students will continue to opt for whatever course of study ensures a smooth graduation and entrance into a two- or four-year institution, even if it is not the best match for their individual career major.

THE GOAL

Create articulation or dual credit agreements between or among secondary and postsecondary institutions that align career education courses and career majors from one educational institution to another without loss of credit or time for the student. This goal aligns with and addresses educational initiatives found in the following:

- *Meeting the Challenge*: Students Recommendations #2, #3, #5, #6, #7; Families and Communities Recommendation #6; Schools and Districts Recommendation #3
- *DESE Strategic Plan 2004*, Outcome I

PROPOSED ACTION ITEMS

1. Establish natural links for students between secondary and postsecondary programming in Missouri using Career Paths/Career Clusters/Career Majors.
2. Increase the understanding of secondary and postsecondary institutions on Career Paths/Career Clusters/Career Majors.
3. Use the natural links for secondary and postsecondary education using Career Paths/Career Clusters/Career Majors that enable students to pursue knowledge and skills and allows them to reach their fullest potential in their chosen career major.

4. Encourage schools to develop written guidelines establishing a dual credit/ articulation policy that provides opportunities for students to earn college credit or advanced standing in their career path by taking college-level work while in high school.

SUPPORT THROUGH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

- A+ Schools Program
- Career Education Enhancement Grants
- Career Paths, Career Clusters, Career Majors
- Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act
- Contextual Teaching and Learning
- Educator Internships/ Externships
- *High Schools That Work*
- Missouri Center for Career Education
- Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program
- Missouri School Improvement Program
- Tech Prep

CONCLUSION

Schools should work closely with students to develop a rigorous course of study that allows opportunity for advanced training, including dual and articulated credit. The course of study will be based on the Career Path/Career Cluster concept and will include multiple pathways for students to achieve their educational and career objectives.

Focus on High-Quality Professional Development

High-quality, ongoing professional development from various providers throughout Missouri will focus on contextual learning methodologies and career development strategies to support all educators in meeting the needs of all children.

THE ISSUE

Educators' knowledge of careers is often confined to their own firsthand career experiences. Many teachers go from high school to college to the classroom with little work experience outside their field and only a limited understanding of the labor market and the application of academic competencies to today's economy.

THE GOAL

Practicing educators participate in high-quality professional development to integrate the contextual learning methodology. This goal aligns with and addresses educational initiatives found in the following:

- *Meeting the Challenge: Teachers Recommendations #1, #2, #6*
- *DESE Strategic Plan 2004, Outcome III*
- *Missouri @ Work, Step I*
- *No Child Left Behind*

PROPOSED ACTION ITEMS

1. Teachers and counselors should participate in high-quality professional development opportunities focused on contextual learning and career development.
2. Teachers and counselors should participate in workplace learning experiences through continuing education and professional development.
3. Teachers and counselors should participate in high-quality professional development on the value and use of Career Paths/Career Clusters to move students at the secondary level toward career majors.

SUPPORT THROUGH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

- Annual Building Bridges Conference
- Annual Interface Conference
- Missouri Center for Career Education
- MoACTE Summer Professional Development Conference
- One-percent professional development dollars from the Outstanding Schools Act
- Regional Professional Development Centers

CONCLUSION

To assist all students in making informed career choices, it is essential that educators be knowledgeable about careers and the level of education and skills required in today's jobs. This includes being able to adopt contextual learning methods to meet the learning needs of individual students.

In Conclusion

MEETING THE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE needs of the state is one of the key responsibilities of our public schools. A well-prepared workforce drives Missouri's economic engine. Preparation of that workforce requires solid academics, good work ethics, and specific technical skills.

These recommendations are developed around the responsibility and contributions that schools have in preparing students to be successful in life and the work of their choice. By implementing career clusters, students can explore a wide range of career opportunities. At the same time, they are obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills they need to follow a career major toward their career goals. These knowledge and skills can form a strong foundation that students need for success in high school, postsecondary education, and the workplace.

For students to take full advantage of the educational and career opportunities available, comprehensive career guidance must be provided as an integral component of their educational experience. This includes current, relevant information about workplace and educational requirements and the opportunities for developing the skills to meet both. Teachers also need to be knowledgeable about careers so they can assist students in making their career choices.

For Missouri to remain strong in the 21st century, a strong public school system must be a part of the infrastructure in every community. In return, students will be able to obtain the knowledge and skills they need to become part of Missouri's economic and social mainstream.



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